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LITERATURE DEPARTMENT
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THE THANK-OFFERING OF FAIRTOWN.

"There is a sudden and urgent need for an increased appropriation," wrote the general secretary of the Woman's Board of Missions; "can you not double your thank-offering this year?"

Mrs. Ayres, president of the society of Fairtown, read the appeal with a sigh. Winter sunshine flooded the cheery room, parlor and library in one, that busy Monday morning. Evidences of a refined and cultured personality were in all its appointments, though the only expensive article of furniture was the fine piano, vibrating yet from the touch of skillful fingers.

"How can a greater effort be made?" she thought, a little wearily, as she left the room to take up the work waiting for her busy hands, and recalled, meantime, the earnest appeal she had made at the last meeting. "Yes," she soliloquized regretfully, "I must take time somehow, and send a personal note to every member. Twenty-five letters, and the days are so full. That lecture and social afternoon must be given up."

The president of Fairtown society had a genius for figures. With a moderate income, by her careful, intelligent management, she made home a cozy nest of comfort for her scholarly husband and their children. Brimful of executive ability, she marshalled her forces for success. She knew the exact condition of the treasury, and supposed she knew the resources from which she might draw. With characteristic force she bent her energies to the task of doubling the amount of last year's thank-offering. By Friday evening personal notes had been delivered to each of the twenty-five members.

They ran after this fashion:

"My Dear Friend:

Money is the great need of the hour. I never longed for wealth as I do now. An urgent appeal has come from the secretary of the Woman's Board of Missions for an increased thank-offering. Let us double our contribution, by great personal sacrifice, if necessary. With an earnest prayer for God's blessing on our effort,

Your sister, Frances Ayres."

The last note despatched she turned for an hour of needed rest to her favorite corner, at the sunset window of the dainty parlor, her well-worn Bible in her hand. With a sudden flash of illumination she reads words long familiar, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Over and over the sweet, imperative command she went, and a voice whispered:

"You have done with your might what your hands found to do. How about the loving?"

"I love my Lord and his work," she said faintly.

"Yes, truly and earnestly," came the answer, "but with your might? Are you willing to pour out your heart in more than in the abandonment of loving, to give the treasures of your home and friendship that all such possibilities in you may be laid at his feet, a joyful thank-offering? You have longed for wealth in this emergency, and not for selfish purposes. God knows the latent power of your heart. You do not, and now he asks the priceless gift of the might of your love."

"O Christ!" The strong, sweet face was buried in her hands. The hush of the quiet room was broken now and then by a long, quivering breath. "It means so much. Help me to love with my might."

The clock on the mantel ticked the minutes away; the half-hour, the hour. A shining face was lifted. "With my might," she said softly, and left the room.

Days sped rapidly away, full of joyful service. With them came a sense of possession. She was growing rich. The Sabbath message of her pastor fell upon a responsive heart, "He became poor that ye—might be rich." The great truth thrilled and enlightened her, and with resources infinitely multiplied she left the

church, unspoken praises keeping time with the throbbing chords of the organ. Monday's mail brought a letter from a dear old friend. How strangely the words fitted: "The only real wealth in the world is love, and that never fails, divine or human." She felt as if she owned all creation.

Again each member of the missionary society received a message from her president, which read something like this:

"Beloved, I was mistaken. Money is *not* the greatest need of the hour. 'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.' He came in love, he comes through love to-day. Please read Deut. 6:5, emphasizing the last word. Let us give, as our richest thank-offering, the might of our love. Will you join me in earnest prayer, and come still praying to our meeting Friday night? Rejoicing as never before in our privilege,

Your sister, FRANCES AYRES."

An earnest group of women were gathered in the well-lighted parlor, every one of the twenty-five being present—an unheard-of occurrence. Their faces were full of eager interest. The president's appeal had taken hold of them with strange power. She had labored not alone. The low buzz of conversatoin ceased as Mrs. Ayres took the chair. Lovely as her life had been, a new atmosphere seemed to surround her. A look of exaltation was on her face.

The routine business of the hour was speedily despatched, and an expectant hush fell on the circle. In a few simple words she told them of her new experience. "My sisters," she added, "what seemed to me a sacrifice a month ago, is to-day a joyful privilege. Oh, how rich we are! Now, out of our boundless wealth, let us offer thanks." She rose to her feet and lifted her glowing face. "O Love divine," she prays with thrilling voice, "having thee we possess all things, and all we have is thine. We give thee again thine own."

"Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure store!"

Without a word the treasurer rose, a basket with a loose cover in her hand. Silently she passed around the circle. Under the cover slipped hands whi[te] and soft, hands thin and worn; some winnin[g] bread by the needle's toil, others trembling with ag[e] hard and knotted by years of unselfish service, an a[r]ist's hand that held the touch of genius, and the slend[er] hand of a musician, fit to strike the chords of an angel's song. They held treasures of silver and gold, and no one knew what another gave. A vivid sense of an unseen Presence held their hearts. At length one clear, sweet voice, tremulous with joy, broke the stillness. A chorus swelled the triumphant song:

"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Saviour's praises speak."

The treasurer of the Woman's Board of Missions, in her office far away, opened wide her astonished eyes. "Now God be praised," she said, "the thank-offering from Fairtown is doubled twice over. The appropriation can be met." And out to women sitting in the midnight darkness of idolatry went a consecrated woman to preach the glad tidings. They turned their weary hearts to the Light, "and many believed on the Lord of such as should be saved."—From *Woman's Missionary Friend.*

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